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# STUDIES

IN  
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

In Their Own Words

*Ignatius, Xavier, Favre  
and Our Way of Proceeding*

PETER SCHINELLER, S.J.



# THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

The Seminar is composed of a number of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the journal, while meant especially for American Jesuits, is not exclusively for them. Others who may find it helpful are cordially welcome to make use of it.

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

38/1 · SPRING 2006

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## *The first word . . .*

Sex. There it is, right before your eyes. Someday the gremlins of Silicone Valley may be able to implant a microchip in the page to measure reader reactions to the text. Until that time comes, we are left with speculation. Those three letters provoke strong reactions. Some may be angry, thinking this is a crude set-up for some inappropriate joke that has no place in a journal such as this. Others may be puzzled that this has anything to do with “the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits” or “the life and work of American Jesuits,” as the inside front cover defines our purpose. At the very least, this tiny word undoubtedly makes many of us uncomfortable.

We are in good company. This Jesuit tradition starts with St. Ignatius, who shoehorned only one brief paragraph on the topic into the *Constitutions* (no. 547) under the heading of “Obedience.” It’s worth quoting in full: “What pertains to the vow of chastity requires no interpretation, since it is evident how perfectly it should be preserved, by endeavoring to imitate the purity of the angels in cleanliness of body and mind. Therefore, with this presupposed, we shall now treat of holy obedience.” One can almost hear his proverbial sigh of relief at having gotten that messy bit of business out of the way. After GC 34, we overcame this long-standing reticence by providing a fuller treatment in *Complementary Norms*, nos. 144–48.

Old mind-sets linger, however. Many of us remember the renovation readings in the refectory, when we were given a list of topics appropriate for conversation. These included prayer, the lives of saints, and the virtues and their opposites, except of course chastity. Over the years, I’ve managed to hang on to my old “Instruction Book for Novices,” revised in 1955. One major section is entitled “The Practice of Obedience and Poverty in the Novitiate.” This citation is instructive in what it says and what it fails to say. In introducing this chapter, the author writes: “. . . since obedience and poverty, with chastity, form the matter of the three vows of religion and constitute the essence of that state, the novices should expect that these three great virtues will be the subjects of the principal instructions given them. . . . And for this reason, during our probation we are carefully exercised in religious obedience and poverty” (p. 36). He follows with sections on poverty and obedience. Period. Another sigh of relief.

By today’s standards, it was a strange world. With few exceptions, most of us entered directly out of high school or college as products of strict, matrifocal Catholic homes and parochial schools. We were altar boys and

sodalists. An enlightened student counselor might have issued Gerald Kelly's pamphlet, *Modern Youth and Chastity*, and the "Question Box" evening of the senior retreat might have offered some information about sex, but for the most part, we didn't talk about or even think about such things for fear of providing a "near occasion of sin." To tell the truth, moral theology didn't help very much. It provided some guidelines for hearing confessions, but on the whole it tended to reduce sexuality to plumbing or a philosophic discussion of the nature of love. Issues connected with homosexuality got little attention. In fact, I can't remember a single class or conference about it. President Clinton had his "don't ask, don't tell" policy for the military; our policy was "don't even think about it."

Here's a test. How many years had you advanced in the course before you finally realized the reason for all this novitiate fuss about "particular friendships," "numquam duo" (never two alone at recreation), and "regula nullius tangendi" (the rule of touch that kept us from playing touch football or basketball—because of contact under the boards)? We even had "sacred silence" while we changed during our afternoon dips in the swimming pond. The thought of homosexuality never crossed my mind, and I find it hard to believe that I was that much more oblivious than everyone else.

It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that this ironclad code of silence—or denial—led to institutionalized ignorance and arrested development in clerical circles. And we have paid a terrible price for it.

How the times have changed! Now we can't avoid the topic, despite our abiding discomfort in dealing with it. The sex-abuse scandal has made clerical celibacy a staple of the headlines, editorial pages, and talk shows. The reaction of church and civil authorities has been strong, and one might ask if in some situations overly strong in dealing with the gray areas. Because of our longstanding aversion to open discussion, the issue took most of us by surprise. We lack the vocabulary and concepts for engaging comfortably in the discourse that has been forced upon us.

It's been humiliating. Over the past few years, dioceses and religious congregations have sponsored compulsory workshops on sexuality. No attendance, no faculties. After many years in ministry, we've had to sign affidavits authorizing background checks with state registries of sex offenders. Some provinces have issued documents on "standards of conduct," with an accompanying letter to be signed and returned, verifying that individuals have read the materials and would abide by the norms set forth. The standards themselves are so obvious that it's embarrassing to see them in print, just as it is uncomfortable, and if the truth be told a bit irritating, to have a panel of professionals explain in detail what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in dealing with minors. Sadly, after what has happened, all this is in fact not only reasonable but necessary, but it is still very sad.



A trifling comparison might be helpful. In several informal conversations, I've learned that many faculty colleagues now include in their syllabi a section on norms of conduct and etiquette: No cellphones in class, no private conversations, no eating, no plagiarism or buying papers from the Internet; come on time; don't monopolize or mutilate reserve books; cutting classes and failing to hand in papers will have a negative impact on the grade. These points should be obvious to college-age students, but to some, they're not. I thought that including these items was a personal quirk of mine, but I have company. It's necessary, but as I think of it, a bit sad.

I've been trying to sort out my own emotions during all of this recent discussion of celibacy. More important is the impact it's having on Jesuit life and the ministry. My conclusions vary with each new revelation and press release, but here are a few points that might match your experience, and might not.

First and obviously, I'm angry. Less obvious is the question of who to be angry with. Several notorious pedophiles and ephebophiles have been identified as convicted felons, and I'm angry with the shame they brought on the Church and the priesthood. Yet at the same time, I think most Jesuits have some sense of the dark workings of the human psyche. We've all known alcoholics, smokers, and overeaters who engage in self-destructive behavior despite their repeated resolutions to change. I've known of some sex offenders whose self-hatred has pushed them to consider suicide; others who think of themselves simply as loving persons misunderstood by society at large. No, I'm not naive. Some may be simply evil. Whether they suffer from delusion or compulsion, their psychic state has to influence our feelings toward them.

Church authorities provide another obvious target. As we look back at the situation, so many of them seem to have mishandled the situation from the start to finish, from failing to remove dangerous priests from ministry to their attempts to shift the blame to opportunistic lawyers and what they too readily labeled a hostile press. There is blame enough for all to share. After the initial outrage, I've become a bit more benign in their regard. Given the contradictory signals they seem to have been receiving from experts, taking the most convenient advice must have seemed a reasonable course of action. Their judgment was, as we now know, in many cases tragically flawed. The three terrible miscalculations came together in a perfect storm of catastrophe: the overarching desire to avoid public scandal; the belief that abusers could change their behavior after a "strong talking-to," a retreat at the seminary and a fresh start in a new setting; and finally a failure to recognize the devastating impact on the victims of abuse. Some church leaders may have been cynical; some may have maintained a posture of denial and hoped the problem would simply go away. But on the whole, charity leads me to want to believe that most

of the problems stem from poor judgment. Again, we're back to that clerical discomfort in dealing with sexual matters. Since we avoided the topic so effectively for so long, how could we expect our leaders to be able to sort out conflicting data from lawyers, psychologists, moralists, social workers, educators, parents, and who knows who else? Those who failed to ask for advice stand doubly culpable.

Most of all, I'm angry with myself and with the clerical state, with our blindness and denial, with our misguided loyalty and our failure to understand. How could we, individually and collectively, have missed what was going on around us and failed to stop it? Having said that, I wonder about the consequences of a different understanding of corporate responsibility. Here are two issues worth thinking about.

In addition to trying to understand the unfocussed anger, I find an equally difficult time with an undefined atmosphere of suspicion that has developed over the last few years. This has hit our homosexual brothers hardest, but it strikes all of us to some degree. The distinction between homosexuality and criminal or sinful behavior remains very fuzzy in some minds, and this must be a terrible burden for gay Jesuits to bear. Are they suspected of something for simply being what they are as God created them? Since we have shied away from this issue for so long, it's difficult to engage the topic with wisdom, understanding, and compassion now. We bring a lot of baggage to the table, not all of it a source of pride.

This atmosphere, I would suggest, may be eroding our "unity of minds and hearts." Do we wonder who is and who isn't gay? Is it important that we know? Why? We long believed that the texture of community life is enriched by individual friendships and groups of friends. Has this notion of "companionship in the Lord" changed? Are relationships as easy as they once were? Does a lifelong friendship between two Jesuits raise questions? When does a group of friends become regarded as an exclusive clique? Why should it matter?

The same kind of vague suspicion can have a corrosive effect on our ministries as well. Clearly, we have to be careful, very careful of our contacts with lay people. After the events of the past few years, we know that we have to be aware of appearances as well as actualities. Keeping our distance helps us avoid problems, but it also limits the good we can do. A parent today would be quite justified in wanting details about their son's or daughter's connection to a Jesuit. Who can blame them? Perhaps we exaggerate the problem in our own minds and draw back. This vague suspicion can have an impact on community life as well. On occasion, some may wonder whether another Jesuit's relationship to a student or parishioner has crossed that indefinable boundary. Is it all in our imagination? Should we say anything, just to be sure? It's not a very healthy environment for fostering trust. Do we want to live this way?



Finally, we live now with an abiding sense of fear. Here's a concrete example of what I mean. Last November the Congregation for Catholic Education issued an instruction entitled "Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and Holy Orders." Although I'm no expert in ecclesiastical nuance, the document struck me as balanced on the whole. In any other time, it would have been taken as a restatement of familiar norms, but in the present atmosphere it struck others as a statement that opened the way for discriminating against gay applicants and devaluing the ministry of many gay, celibate priests. Coupled with the current round of visitations to seminaries, it deepened the sense of the Church as an inhospitable environment for homosexual people. The document and the seminary visitations may lead to constructive outcomes, but in the present climate of fear, we wonder how it might be used by some to further their own agenda. We're simply afraid of what it might lead to.

Fear touches all of us in some degree. Who of us has not raked over the past, trying to recall any incident, however innocent, that might be resurrected years later as an allegation of impropriety? Can anything we say or do in the present possibly be misconstrued? Priests were once above suspicion; now after the scandals, we are obvious targets. And if the allegation comes, will the judicial processes work justly on our behalf or will we become a demonstration model for "zero tolerance." And if the allegation is proved groundless and we are restored to our previous ministry, how can we ever restore our reputations?

My guess is that many American Jesuits share some of these dark thoughts. My hope is that we might break through our long black wall of silence. Now that the shock has passed and we have been forced to confront issues of sexuality in the public forum, we might reflect a bit on what the experience has meant to our Jesuit life together.

*Richard A. Blake, S.J.*

Editor





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Peter Schineller, S.J., was superior of the Nigeria Ghana Region when he was elected to General Congregation 34 as a representative of the New York Province. At the congregation he served as president of the commission charged with drafting Decree 26, "Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding." After completing his doctorate at the University of Chicago, where he specialized in the thought of Karl Rahner, he taught systematic theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago. When it closed, he went to the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. After his term as regional superior, he remained in Nigeria, heading *Gaudium et Spes*, the pastoral institute in Abuja. Currently, he is president of Loyola Jesuit College in Abuja. His previous contributions to *STUDIES* are *Newer Approaches to Christology and the Spiritual Exercises* (12, nos. 4 and 5 [September and November 1980]) and *Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius* (31, no. 4 [September 1999]).

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## *Ignatius, Xavier, Favre, and Our Way of Proceeding*

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*During the Jubilee Year the writings of St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, and Blessed Peter Favre assume a special significance for Jesuits. Arranged according to the themes outlined in the decree "Our Way of Proceeding," this collection of original texts, situated in their historical settings, provides a valuable resource for personal reflection and public presentations during this year of celebration.*

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### Introduction

In the introduction to his most enlightening book on Peter Favre, William Bangert, writer of the widely circulated *History of the Society of Jesus*, begins: "Jerome Nadal—the promoter of the Constitutions—had the practice at Communion at Mass of praying for the grace to imitate Ignatius, Peter Favre, and Francis Xavier."<sup>1</sup> In Nadal's own words, we read that he prayed to Christ to "be given the grace of resembling Fr. Ignatius, Fr. Favre and Fr. Xavier. Within, I seemed to hear Christ telling me that he was giving me this grace."<sup>2</sup>

These are the three Jesuits that we celebrate in this jubilee year of grace. The year began on December 3, 2005, and ends one year later. We recall the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of St. Francis Xavier, April 7, 1506; the anniversary of the birth of

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<sup>1</sup>William V. Bangert, S.J., *To the Other Towns: A Life of Peter Favre, First Companion of St. Ignatius* (Westminster, Md. 1959), vii.

<sup>2</sup>William V. Bangert, S.J., *Jerome Nadal, S.J., 1507–1580: Tracking the First Generation of Jesuits* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 200.



Blessed Peter Favre, born six days after Xavier, on April 13, 1506; and the 450th anniversary of the death of St. Ignatius, July 31, 1556.

What did these men say, write, and accomplish that is significant, revelatory, and challenging for our way of life, our way of proceeding, as we celebrate the jubilee in this twenty-first century? I have selected three key areas of Jesuit apostolic life, namely, our life in the Spirit, our life in community, and our mission. What can we learn from these first Jesuits about our life in the spirit, about our union of minds and hearts, and our apostolic life? What were the graces given to the three men we celebrate, the graces that they exemplified, the graces that Nadal saw in them and wished to imitate?

My goal here is to look from the past to the present and future, with the help of these three First Companions. The lens or horizon is that of the eight characteristics of our way of proceeding presented in decree 26 of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation. Father General Kolvenbach has said that this decree, "Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding," is his favorite.<sup>3</sup> It has been used for province renewals, in prayer services, and in retreats. Individual Jesuits, Jesuit communities, and Jesuit apostolates might well evaluate how they stand up in the light of these characteristics. These are the eight characteristics that provide most of the subheadings as we look at these Jesuits we celebrate this year:

1. Deep personal love for Jesus Christ
2. Contemplatives in action
3. An apostolic body in the Church
4. In solidarity with those most in need
5. Partnership with others
6. Called to learned ministry
7. Men sent, always available for new missions
8. Ever searching for the more, the *magis*

Rather than review the overall lives and ministries of the three men, I will merely select vignettes from their lives and writings that illustrate their way of proceeding.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example an interview with him in *National Jesuit News*, November 1998, p. 12.



We know the historical background of their relationship. Favre and Xavier were students at the University of Paris, studying and living together for almost four years, from 1525 on, until Ignatius arrived there in 1528. Favre writes that he shared table and purse with Xavier. In 1529 Ignatius joined them in their lodgings, and remained with them until 1535. Xavier received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1529. In January and February 1534, Favre made the Exercises. Ordained a priest on May 30, 1534, he celebrated his first Mass on July 22, 1534. Three weeks later, Favre celebrated Mass at Montmartre for the First Companions. Xavier finally made the Exercises in 1534. In 1535 Ignatius returned to Spain for health reasons, leaving Favre in Paris in charge of the group. They all had arranged to meet in Venice in January 1537 to prepare for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unable to make the voyage, in 1538 the whole group of companions put themselves at the service of the Pope for the good of the Church; and in 1540 the Society of Jesus came into being as a religious order.

Favre, age 33, left Rome in 1539 and traveled on mission to the north and the west, especially in Germany and Spain. He would not see Ignatius for seven years, and he would never see Xavier again. During these seven years of travel "to the other towns," he would preach, teach, and, above all, share the treasure of the Spiritual Exercises. In 1546 he returned to Rome in order to prepare to participate in the Council of Trent. He became ill and remained with Ignatius for only a few weeks. He died in Rome at the age of forty, on August 1, 1546, before he could go to Trent.

Xavier left Rome in March 1540 for Portugal on the first leg of his journey to the Far East, responding to the request of the King of Portugal, John III. This was before Ignatius was elected general superior, before the Society was officially confirmed, and before the Constitutions were fully written or promulgated. He never saw Ignatius or Favre again. The following year, 1541, when he was thirty-five years of age, he left Europe for India. In 1549 he traveled to Japan. In 1552, at the age of forty-six, he died within sight of China, which he had hoped to enter. Actually he had been called back to Portugal, but the letter from Ignatius never reached him. He had spent ten years of ministry and mission in the Far East.

Ignatius remained in Rome during the period of the missionary activity of Favre and Xavier. He guided the new Society, wrote its *Constitutions* and several thousand letters. He died in Rome less

than four years after the death of Xavier, in July 1556. Ignatius was beatified on July 27, 1609, and Xavier on October 25, 1619. They were canonized together on March 12, 1622. Favre was beatified on September 5, 1872 and remains a Blessed, with little prospect of canonization. Indeed he was and remains "the quiet companion."<sup>4</sup>

## I. Ignatius

### Life in the Spirit

#### *A Deep Personal Love for Jesus*

Jesus Christ is at the center of the *Spiritual Exercises*. At the end of the First Week, Ignatius instructs us to conclude the meditations on sin by imagining Christ present before us on the cross and asking:

What have I done for Christ?

What am I doing for Christ?

What ought I to do for Christ?<sup>5</sup>

The Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises focus on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. A grace we especially pray for is "to ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become human for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely" (104).

The memoirs and the personal journal or diary of Ignatius further point to his reverent familiarity with Jesus. We may give one rather quaint and familiar example of his desire to know and love Jesus. When Ignatius the pilgrim was about to leave the Holy Land, he desired to be once again close to Jesus, and visit the places where he walked and prayed.

There came over him . . . a great desire to go back and visit the Mount of Olives again, before he left. . . . On the Mount of Olives is

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<sup>4</sup> See the very aptly titled book of Mary Purcell on Favre, *The Quiet Companion: Peter Favre, S.J., 1506–46* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Saint Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, trans. with commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 53. Locators given refer to the marginal numbers in the text. References to this source will be abbreviated to *SpEx.*, followed by the appropriate marginal number.



a stone, from which Our Lord went up into heaven, and even now the footprints can be seen; this is what he wanted to go back to see.<sup>6</sup>

On his way to Rome after the gathering of the First Companions in Venice, Ignatius experiences the famous vision at La Storta that confirms his personal relationship to Jesus.

And being one day in a church some miles before arrival in Rome, and making prayer, he sensed such a change in his soul, and he saw so clearly that God the Father was putting him with Christ his Son, that he would not have the wilfulness to have any doubt about this: it could only be that God the Father was putting him with his Son.<sup>7</sup>

In his so-called "Spiritual Diary," he later recalls this incident: "*It seemed in some way to be from the Blessed Trinity that Jesus was shown or felt, and I remembered the time when the Father put me with the Son*" (84f., §22, italics in the source). Indeed, throughout this spiritual diary, we see Ignatius constantly in union with Jesus, often overwhelmed with consolation, devotion, and tears. This experience was most dramatic during the celebration of Mass, but frequently continued during prayers after Mass and through the day. Thus he writes on February 24, 1544,

*On these occasions my love was so great, I so felt and saw Jesus, that it seemed that nothing could happen in the future capable of separating me from Him or of making me doubt about the graces and confirmation that I had received.* (86, §23; italics in the source)

In founding the Society of Jesus, Ignatius insisted the name of the brethren should be the "Society of Jesus." He would let nothing deter him from this conviction. Polanco later recalls Ignatius's conviction in this matter:

The name is the Company of Jesus. Father Master Ignatius had so many visitations and signs of approval and confirmation of this

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<sup>6</sup>There are several English-language versions of what has come to be referred to as Ignatius's autobiography. In this essay quotations from this source will be taken from Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, "Reminiscences," in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. with introductions and notes by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (New York: Penguin Group, Penguin Books, 1996). Parmananda R. Divarkar has called his translation *A Pilgrim's Testament* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995). William J. Young, S.J., styles his translation *St. Ignatius' Own Story* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956). References will be given by page and section number, in this case p. 35, section 47. This source will be identified as "Reminiscences."

<sup>7</sup>"Reminiscences," 60, no. 96.

name, that I heard him say he would feel to be acting against God's will and offending him if he were to doubt of its fitness. When he was urged to change it, because some said we were taking Jesus for ourselves, and others gave other reasons, I remember him saying that even if all the members of the Society judged otherwise, he would not give in on this.<sup>8</sup>

A deep personal love for Jesus was not the mark of Ignatius alone. It was to mark the lives of all Jesuits. Thus, writing to scholastics, Ignatius stresses the centrality of the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

But above all I would like you to be uplifted by the pure love of Jesus Christ, together with the desire for His honour and for the salvation of souls that He has redeemed. In this "company" you are his soldiers with a special rank and a special pay.<sup>9</sup>

### *Contemplative in Action*

The deepest insight into Ignatius as a contemplative in action comes from Nadal, who gave this description of the life and prayer of Ignatius. He explains that Ignatius frequently enjoyed the contemplation of the Trinity:

Father Ignatius enjoyed this kind of prayer by reason of a great privilege and in a most singular manner, and this besides, that in all things, actions, and conversations he contemplated the presence of God and experienced the reality of spiritual things, so that he was a contemplative likewise in action (a thing which he used to express by saying: God must be found in everything).<sup>10</sup>

So too, Ribadeneira writes as follows:

We frequently saw him taking the occasion of little things to lift his mind to God, who even in the smallest things is great. From seeing a plant, foliage, a leaf, a flower, any fruit, from the consider-

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<sup>8</sup> Juan de Polanco, "Somario de las cosas . . .," in *Fontes narrativi de San Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*, 4 vols., nos. 66, 73, 85, 93 of the *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1943–65), 1:204.

<sup>9</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, Letter 16 (1547), in *Personal Writings*, 175, §12.

<sup>10</sup> This is found in Joseph Conwell, *Contemplation in Action* (Spokane, Wash.: Gonzaga University, 1957), 25. The original text can be found in Jerónimo Nadal, "In examen annotationes," in *Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal*, vol. 4, vol. 47 of the series *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Madrid, 1905), 651 f.



ation of a little worm or any other animal, he raised himself above the heavens and penetrated the deepest thoughts; and from each little thing he drew doctrine and most profitable counsels for instructing in the spiritual life. And he desired that all in the Society accustom themselves always to find the presence of God in everything and that they learn to raise their hearts not only in private prayer, but also in all of their occupations, carrying them out and offering them in such a way that they would feel no less devotion in action than in meditation. And he used to say that this method of prayer is very profitable for all and especially for those who are much engaged in exterior things of the divine service.<sup>11</sup>

At the dawn of his conversion, while Ignatius was recuperating in Loyola, he notes that he spent his time in prayer and in writing. Then he notes that "the greatest consolation he used to receive was to look at the sky and the stars, which he did often and for a long time, because with this he used to feel in himself a great impetus towards serving Our Lord."<sup>12</sup> Ignatius enjoyed contemplating the beauty of the universe, but what is especially noteworthy is that even at this early stage contemplation led to action. It did not remain in the realm of pure contemplation.

So too, Laínez notes that this continued later in life, during Ignatius's years in Rome.

At night [Ignatius] would go up on the roof of the house, with the sky there up above him. He would sit there quietly, absolutely quietly. He would take his hat off and look up for a long time at the sky. Then he would fall on his knees, bowing profoundly to God. . . . And the tears would begin to flow down his cheeks like a stream, but so quietly and gently that you heard not a sob nor a sigh nor the least possible movement of his body.<sup>13</sup>

The daily examen, which Ignatius insisted upon, becomes a major instrument in his own spiritual life and those of his companions. Through it one develops the ability to find God in all things. Yet, while formal prayer, especially the examen, remains important for Ignatius, it is not the only way to God. Thus, in July 1549 he wrote as follows to Francis Borgia, at that time the Duke of Gandía:

<sup>11</sup> Conwell, *Contemplation in Action*, 10, with its reference to Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, "Algumas cousas . . ." (known as his *Memoriale*), in *Fontes narrativi*, 1:644.

<sup>12</sup> "Reminiscences," 16, §11.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loyolæ*, in *Fontes narrativi*, 4:74 f., §15).



It would be good to realize that not only when he prays does man serve God, because if he served God only when he prayed, prayers that lasted twenty-four hours a day, if such a thing were possible, would be short, since the whole man as completely as possible should be given to God. And indeed, at times God is served more in other ways than by prayer, so much so in fact that God is pleased that prayer is omitted entirely for other works, and much more, that it be curtailed.<sup>14</sup>

Further parts of that strong letter to the Jesuits in Spain make the same point. Ignatius warns against excessive penance and prayer, and criticizes those who judge that only prayers over two hours long are real prayers (*ibid.*, 210f.). So too, the *Constitutions* limit and restrict the amount of formal prayer.<sup>15</sup>

## Union of Minds and Hearts

### *An Apostolic Body in the Church*

Ignatius was inspired to gather followers and friends to advance the work of the kingdom. A powerful expression of this intention is found in the "Deliberation of the First Fathers," which owes much of its inspiration to Ignatius. There we read these lines:

In as much as our most kind and affectionate Lord has deigned to gather us together and unite us, men so spiritually weak and from such diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, we ought not split apart what God has gathered and united; on the contrary, we ought day by day to strengthen and stabilize our union, rendering ourselves one body with special concern for each other, in order to effect the greater spiritual good of our fellow men. For united spiri-

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<sup>14</sup> *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 211.

<sup>15</sup> See *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 142, §342f., applicable to scholastics, and 254, §582f., concerning those promoted to grade. Hereafter this volume will be cited as *Cons.*, followed by the page number and the boldface section number.

tual strength is more robust and braver in any arduous enterprise than it would be if segmented.<sup>16</sup>

And again from that same "Deliberation,"

Finally, we decided in the affirmative; namely, that . . . we should not break this divinely constituted oneness and fellowship, but rather strengthen and consolidate it ever more, forming ourselves into one body. (ibid.)

This was the initial vision—a body of men dedicated to the spiritual good of their fellow men and women. Since all had learned so much from Master Ignatius, he was easily chosen to be the leader of the group. The body was formed, but the needs of the mission led to the members being sent out in many directions, responding to the call and wishes of the Pope and bishops. In view of this dispersion, Ignatius develops Part VIII of the *Constitutions*, which is given the precise title "Helps towards Uniting the Dispersed Members with Their Head and among Themselves." He presumes that we are dispersed and that we must work at remaining a strong apostolic body in the service of the Church.

As general superior in Rome for many years, Ignatius builds up and supports the brethren. He was noted for his kindness, especially to the sick. He wanted to be kept updated on their names and their condition, and he would go to any length for them. In regard to the young Jesuits, he made sure they ate well. He saw the importance of recreation and thus purchased villa houses, encouraged their use, and gave specific rules for those using them. More than monastic silence, Ignatius stressed the art and grace of conversation.

From those separated by distance from Rome, Ignatius expected frequent written reports detailing the fruits that the Jesuit laborers were reaping in the Lord's vineyard. There was to be constant communication on the progress of the works and the needs of the mission. All this would help in building up the union of hearts and minds.

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<sup>16</sup>First conclusion in the "Deliberatio primorum patrum," in *Monumenta Constitutionum prævia*, 1539, vol. 63 of the *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1943), 3.



Such union of minds and hearts in the apostolic body of the Society should also be shared and extended to others. As Ignatius writes to the scholastics,

[y]ou should not be content to preserve lasting unity and love among yourselves, but should spread it to all people. Take care to sustain in your minds and hearts burning desires for the salvation of others, valuing each person at the price they cost, the blood, indeed, the life, of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Thus this attitude of *cura personalis* should not only characterize the relation of the superior to the members and the members among themselves, but would be extended to those we serve in ministry. On many occasions, such as the death of a loved one, Ignatius wrote encouraging letters to the families of Jesuits. These were not simply formal notes of sympathy, but detailed letters in which he tried to extend the union of minds and hearts even to the families of Jesuits.<sup>18</sup>

## Mission

### *In Solidarity with Those Most in Need*

Reaching out to the needy became a characteristic of the First Companions. Ignatius writes thus from Venice in 1537:

In the middle of January nine of my friends in the Lord arrived here from Paris. All have their MA degrees and are well versed in Theology. . . . They had to cope with many threats from wars, long journeys on foot and the worst of the winter. All are lodged in two hospitals, and split up in order to care for the sick who are in poverty, doing the jobs that are most demeaning and physically repugnant.<sup>19</sup>

Ignatius eventually travels to Rome, where he will remain for the rest of his life. In addition to the administrative tasks, he reaches out apostolically in times of crisis and in more ordinary times. He

<sup>17</sup> Letter 16 (May 1547), in *Personal Writings*, 179, §24.

<sup>18</sup> Two examples of such letters are a letter of 1551, consoling a sister on her brother's death, and one of 1556, consoling the mother of a student. These are found in *Inigo: Letters Personal and Spiritual*, selected by Michael Ivens, S.J., edit. and trans. Joseph A. Munitiz (Sussex: Inigo Enterprises, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, letter from Venice (July 24, 1537), 144 f.

sets up a home for prostitutes. When the sickness of the plague hits, he opens the doors to assist the sick and needy. In the harsh winter of 1538–39, it is said that Ignatius and his companions sheltered four hundred homeless persons in the building of the Gesù.

Since the number of Jesuits was small, Ignatius often enlisted the help of others and, in particular, the collaboration of women in running these establishments. Thus a group of noble ladies ran the house of St. Martha.

What he himself did Ignatius expected of other Jesuits, wherever they might be assigned. So the Fathers attending the Council of Trent are advised to look out for the needs of others, especially the poor.

And what they should especially seek to accomplish for God's greater glory is to preach, hear confessions, lecture, instruct children, give good example, visit the poor in the hospitals, exhort the neighbor according to the amount of talent which each is conscious of possessing, so as to move as many as possible to prayer and devotion.<sup>20</sup>

### *Partnership with Others*

Many of his letters are precisely to link the support and aid of the powerful to the works of the Society in education and in social service. Colleges were founded and endowed by the powerful and wealthy so that education would be available free of charge. It is certainly true that many of the letters and discussions of Ignatius were with the powerful—powerful civic leaders, princes and kings, and powerful church leaders, including the Pope and bishops. Yet, in very many cases, this encounter with the powerful had as one of its aims to link the resources of the powerful with the needs and scarcity of the powerless. Ignatius had very much in mind the needy when he entered into agreements with the civic and church leaders. He realized that for our works to succeed, many hands would be needed.

In the *Constitutions* Ignatius sees clearly the need and the advantage of enlisting others in our works.

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<sup>20</sup> "Instruction of Ignatius to the Fathers at the Council of Trent, 1546," in Young, *Letters of Ignatius*, 95.



For that same reason, too, preference ought to be shown to the aid which is given to the great nations, such as the Indies, or to important cities, or to universities, which are generally attended by numerous persons who by being aided themselves can become laborers for the help of others. (*Cons.*, 286, §622<sup>v.11</sup>)

He is always concerned and careful that we express our gratitude to our benefactors and our partners by performing effective good works and through continual prayers of gratitude for their benefactions.

### *Called to Learned Ministry*

Education was important to Ignatius from the beginning.

Once the said pilgrim had understood that it was God's will he should not be in Jerusalem, he had constantly had with him thoughts about what was to be done. In the end he was inclining more toward studying for a time in order to be able to help souls, and was coming to the decision to go to Barcelona. (*Reminiscences*, 36, no. 50)

Ignatius also saw the need for learning in his followers. Schools and colleges would be established to assure solid formation of our own members. Eventually these colleges would be open to laity and become an important part of the Jesuit mission.

The very title of Part IV of the *Constitutions* puts this emphasis upon learning, but also holds it in relationship to other aspects of Jesuit life. Long sections of this document, "The Learning and Other Means of Helping Their Neighbor That Are to Be Imparted to Those Who Are Retained in the Society," go into detail on the students, teachers, and the content and method of the studies for those who will be effective laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

Yet for Ignatius it was clear that learning alone would never suffice. Thus, in a letter to Jesuit scholastics, he shows his concern for learning and, at the same time, for virtue.

By advancing with your academic work on the one hand, and growing in brotherly love on the other, may you come to be completely instruments of divine grace, and co-workers in that most



sublime task, the bringing back of God's creatures into God's kingdom, their ultimate end.<sup>21</sup>

*Men Sent, Always Available for New Missions*

In the mind of Ignatius, the first Jesuits were to be mobile, available to go where the need was greatest. Thus, he confided to Câmara in his *Reminiscences*:

If permission were not given them to remain in Jerusalem, they were to return to Rome, and present themselves to Christ's vicar, so that he could employ them wherever he judged to be more for the glory of God and the good of souls. (54, §85)

This is clearly formulated in the *Constitutions*, so much so that it is said that the road is our home:

The aim and end of this Society is, by traveling through the various parts of the world at the order of the supreme vicar of Christ our Lord or of the superior of the Society itself, to preach, hear confessions, and use all the other means it can with the grace of God to help souls. (*Cons.*, 130, §308)

When there were only six Jesuits in Rome and a request came for help, Ignatius immediately sent two Jesuits to Portugal and to the Indies, namely Simão Rodrigues and Nicolás Bobadilla. When Bobadilla became ill, Xavier took his place.

Inspired by the words and decisions of Ignatius, Nadal sees the essence or *raison d'être* of the Society of Jesus to consist of this availability and generous response in order to be able to meet needs:

The Society cares for those persons who are either totally neglected or inadequately attended to. This is the basic reason for the founding of the Society, this is its power, this is what makes it distinctive in the Church.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Letter 16 (1547) in Ivens and Munitiz, *Inigo*, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Jerónimo Nadal, *Orationis observationes*, vol. 90a of *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1964), 126, §316. This is also cited in *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), decree 6, p. 87, §168 n.9. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to GC 34, followed by the page number and boldface

*Ever Searching for the Magis*

An incident reported by Ribadeneira points to the thoroughly apostolic vision of Ignatius. He reports that on one occasion, Ignatius said to Laínez:

"Master Lainez, if God were to say to you: If you want to die at once, I will give you eternal glory, but if you choose to live, I do not guarantee you the gift of final perseverance. If you thought that by remaining on earth, you would be able to achieve some great thing, what would your choice be?"

"To die at once," said Laínez, "so that I would be sure."

Ignatius replied, "For my part, I would not. If I thought that by continuing to live I could accomplish some great work for God, I would beg Him to leave me on earth till I had done it. I would turn my eyes toward God and not toward myself. I would take no account of my danger or my security."<sup>23</sup>

Human life, at least in the mind of Ignatius, is not primarily to be seen as a trial or test that we pass to get to heaven as quickly as possible by avoiding sin and evil. Rather, human life is a project or a challenge to do something great for God.

The desire to accomplish a "great work for God" becomes a prominent theme in the *Exercises*. For example,

Those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord, will not only offer their persons for the labor, but go further still. They will work against their human sensitivities and against their carnal and worldly love, and they will make offerings of greater worth and moment.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of greater service, the *magis*, becomes even more prominent in the *Constitutions*, Part VII of which bears the lengthy title "The Relations to Their Neighbor of Those Already Incorporated into the Society When They are Dispersed into the Vineyard of Christ our Lord." Justly famous are the norms found there for making the best choice. Consideration must be given to the greater need, where

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section number.

<sup>23</sup> Juan Luis Segundo refers to this story in his essay "Ignatius Loyola: Trial or Project?" in *Signs of the Times* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 169f. The original story in Spanish is found in Ribadeneira's sixteenth-century *Vita Ignatii Loyolæ*, 773–75.

<sup>24</sup> *SpEx* 54, §97.



greater fruit is likely to be reaped, where our indebtedness is greater, and where good can be extended, because "the more universal the good is, the more it is divine" (*Cons.*, 286, §622).

## II. Francis Xavier

### Life in the Spirit

The focus of the writings of Xavier is on mission. Thus, as we might expect, we do not find many instances in the letters of Xavier where he speaks about his personal devotion or relationship to Jesus. Yet it was the personal call of the King, as contemplated in the Exercises, that gave him zeal and energy for his missionary activity.

Xavier notes that the perils of the journeys in the Far East caused him to intensify his prayer, to give himself completely into the hands of the Lord. He prays to Mary and the saints: "Nor did I neglect to have recourse to all saints in the glory of Paradise, beginning with those who here below were of the holy Company of Jesus, especially the blessed soul of Father Favre."<sup>25</sup> He felt sure that Peter Favre, his companion in Paris and later his friend on mission in northern Europe, was among the saints of God.

For the most part, therefore, we rely on the testimony of others for insights into Xavier's life in the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> In the life of Xavier by James Brodrick, we read of one account of his devotion at Mass. Before his journey to India, during his stay in Bologna, a priest observed him as he offered Mass.

At Mass, and particularly if it was a Mass of the Passion of Christ, he wept abundant tears. One Friday, while saying Mass in the chapel of Santa Lucia, he was rapt out of himself for more than an hour at the Memento, though the server tried hard to rouse him by tugging at his vestments. . . . Though very ill all the while, he never omitted his early morning prayer, or his Mass, or any of his daily avocations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> News of Favre's death on August 1, 1546, was brought to St. Francis in 1547. See James Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier* (New York: The Wicklow Press, 1952), 301.

<sup>26</sup> Unlike Ignatius and Favre, Xavier did not leave any journal or autobiography. We have his letters, but they do not give any great detail on the practices or shape of his own life in the Spirit. This explains the reliance on other sources in this section.

<sup>27</sup> Brodrick, *Xavier*, 63.

As Brodrick relates, a companion of Xavier, a Portuguese official, Rodrigo de Sequeira, who journeyed with Xavier, recorded that he could see the father at night on his knees, arms uplifted, before a little crucifix made of wood. Then after a little rest, he would be up before dawn to say his Office and his Mass (238). Fr. Mansilhas, a priest, who had left the Jesuits because of ill health, also gives evidence of his holiness:

I went about with him for six or seven years on the Fishery Coast. No human being could have done what he did or have lived as he lived without being full of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, his life was more that of a saint and angel than of a man. (252)

Quoting Xavier, Brodrick records that through his years of tireless ministry he proceeded with an overwhelming trust in God.

I feel it incumbent upon me to sacrifice my temporal life for the sake of the spiritual life of my neighbor, and so, putting all my trust in God our Lord, I have offered myself to danger and death in whatever shape it may come, longing as I do to be conformed in my own small and feeble way to the saying of our Redeemer, "He who wants to save his life, will lose it, who loses his life for my sake, will find it." (253f.)

As Xavier moved about the Far East, we see him practicing ongoing discernment. Through conversation, study, inquiry, personal experience, and prayer, he seeks and discovers God's will, thus learning where the Lord wants him to move. On the basis of this discernment he makes his decision to stay or to move on to new horizons.

Xavier relies upon the examen, and so recommends the practice of regular prayer and the daily examen to Fr. Barzaeus as he is sent out on mission.

Twice a day, or at least once, make your particular examens. Be careful never to omit them. So live as to make more account of your own conscience than you do of those of others; for he who is not good in regard to himself, how can he be good in regard to others?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young, ed. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 191.



As a further indication of his personal life of prayer, in his instruction for Christians, his rule of life for converts, he expresses his devotion to the Guardian Angels.

I beg you, blessed Angel, to whose providence I am entrusted, to be always at hand to help me. Present my petitions to the merciful ears of God Our Lord that of His clemency and by your prayers, He may pardon my sins of the past, give me to know truly and repent heartily of my present sins, and counsel and warn me that I may shun sins in the future. Through you may He give me grace to do good and to persevere to the end. Drive away from me by the power of the Almighty God every temptation of the devil, and that which my own deeds, mixed as they always are with some evil, merit not, do you obtain for me by your prayers before our Lord. And if at times you see me straying from the paths of goodness to follow the errors of sin, procure that I may turn again speedily to my Savior in the way of justice. When you behold me in tribulation and anguish, obtain for me help from God by your sweet advocacy. I beg you never to forsake me, but ever to shield, help and defend me from all troubling and assaults of the demons, watching over me day and night, at all hours and moments. And when this life draws to a close, do not permit the demons to frighten me, and let me not fall into despair. Leave me not, my Guardian, until you have conducted me into the blessed vision of God, in the glory of which I with you and God's Blessed Mother Mary and all the saints may rejoice for ever. Amen.<sup>29</sup>

## Union of Minds and Hearts

Before Xavier left Rome for India, he showed his admiration for Ignatius and Favre by expressing his judgment that Ignatius would be the best person to be the leader of the Society, since

with no little effort, [he] brought us all together and . . . not without effort, will be able to preserve, govern, and cause us to advance from good to better, since he has a greater knowledge of each one of us than anyone else.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Brodrick, *Xavier*, 316.

<sup>30</sup> This quotation and most of those following are from *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, trans. with introduction by M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992). This passage is Xavier's "Declaration, Vote, and Vows" (March 15, 1540), *ibid.*, 10.

If Ignatius were to die, then Xavier would favor Peter Favre as his successor. Indeed, we behold three friends bound together, with love, respect, and admiration for each other even as they go separate ways on mission. Xavier sees Ignatius as the one who enabled them to come together, united in mind and heart.

*An Apostolic Body in the Church*

The mission of Xavier came about in response to the request of the Catholic leader of Portugal, King John III. The vow of special obedience to the pope found perfect expression in the sending of Xavier as apostolic nuncio to the Far East. Upon arriving in India, he expressed concern for the status and spiritual life of the diocesan clergy. Through retreats he challenged many of them to change their ways and be the good priests they were ordained to be.

Xavier felt the physical absence of his brother Jesuits, but at the same time he maintained strong ties and bonds with them through letters and prayer. He wrote 167 letters, many to the Jesuits in Europe, and he eagerly awaited letters from them. In several of his letters he explicitly asks his Jesuit brothers to pray for him.

For the love of Christ our Lord and of his most blessed Mother and of all the saints in heaven, I ask you, my dearest Brothers and Fathers, that you be particularly mindful of me and continuously commend me to God, since I live in such great need of his favor and assistance. I have great need of your continual spiritual assistance, for from much experience I have come to know that God our Lord has, through your intercession, helped and assisted me in many toils of body and spirit.<sup>31</sup>

In another letter he thanks his brothers for the graces he has received through their prayers:

God has granted me a great grace through your prayers and the constant remembrance which you have of me when you commend me to him. I know that God our Lord, despite your physical absence, lets me perceive through your help and assistance my infinite multitude of sins and gives me strength to go among the infidels, for which I give great thanks to God our Lord and to you my dearest brothers. (73, §14 [January 15, 1544])

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 141 (May 10, 1546).



In his eagerness to receive news about the growth and activity of his brother Jesuits, he earnestly pleads for news and also for advice on how to proceed.

[W]rite to me in long detail about all of our Company. In this world I have no hope of ever seeing you again, except as in a glass darkly through the medium of your letters. Do not deny me this favor, all unworthy of it though I am. Remember that your great merits were given you by God that through them even I might be refreshed and have hope of attainment. In God's name and for His glory, tell me fully and clearly what ought to be my method of approach to the pagans and Moors of the country to which I am now going. It is my hope that by means of you God will teach me how I must proceed in order to convert them to His holy faith. Your letters will show me the blunders to avoid, the wrong methods which I must change.<sup>32</sup>

In a letter to Ignatius, he explains part of his own policy of admission of candidates to the Society, and then offers a beautiful description of our Jesuit life in common.

I have treated with love and charity those whom I have thought were suitable for the Society in order to strengthen them the more in it, since they endure so many hardships in these regions in order to serve God our Lord, and also because it seems to me that "Society of Jesus" means to say "a Society of love and in conformity of minds" and not "of severity and servile fear." (*Letters and Instructions*, 2217, §5 [January 12, 1549])

In an instruction to Fr. Barzaeus, rector and vice-provincial, he insists that the Jesuits must write and communicate annually to Ignatius, describing the fruits of their labors in great detail. In addition he directs the priests to "write another general letter for all the priests who are in Europe, informing them about the fruit which is being produced in their regions" (404, §9). Xavier instructs that this letter should be addressed as follows: "For the Fathers and Brothers of Coimbra, and for all the other priests of the Society of Jesus who are in Rome and Europe" (*ibid.*). Indeed, in his mind, communication was necessary for the union of minds and hearts.

Knowing that he was separated from the Jesuits in Europe and often separated even from the Jesuits in India, we necessarily have the image of Xavier as the strong, solitary missionary. Yet he

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<sup>32</sup> As found in Brodrick, *Xavier*, 404, §9.

himself felt strong ties—and needed these strong ties—to the apostolic body of the Society. He expresses this need again in a long letter of 1548 to his Jesuit brothers in Rome.

When I begin to speak of this holy Society of Jesus, I am unable to break away from such a delightful topic, and I am unable to stop writing. . . . I do not know how I can bring this letter to a better ending than to confess to all of the Society, that *if I should ever forget the Society of the Name of Jesus, may my right hand be forgotten*, since in so many ways I have come to know the great debt which I owe to all those of the Society. . . . And so I bring this to a close, asking God our Lord, that, since in his holy mercy he brought us together in his holy Society in this most laborious life, he may unite us in his glorious company in heaven, since we are in this life so far separated from each other out of love for him. (180, §22, with italics in the source)

Union with the brethren through prayer and through letters remained essential for Xavier, not just for his own support and satisfaction, but for the accomplishment of his mission. So he writes to the brothers in Rome on how love unites them in spite of great distances.

God our Lord knows how much more consolation my soul would have from seeing you than from my writing such uncertain letters, as these to you because of the great distance that these lands are from Rome; but, since God our Lord has removed us, though we are so much alike in spirit and in love, to such distant lands, there is no reason because of any intervening distance, if I am not mistaken, for a lessening of love and care in those who love each other in the Lord, since, as it seems to me, we are almost always seeing each others, even though we do not speak familiarly with each other as we used to do. (116f., §1)

Finally, in a famous passage, he affirms his strong love and union with his separated brothers. He keeps their names near his heart.

So that I may never forget you and ever have a special remembrance of you, I would have you know, dearest brothers, that for my own consolation I have cut your names from the letters which you have written to me with your own hands so that I may constantly carry them with me together with the vow of profession which I made because of the consolations which I receive from them. I gave thanks first of all to God our Lord, and then to you, most dear Brothers and Fathers, for the fact that God has so made you that I derive such



great consolation from bearing your names. And since we shall soon see each other in the next life with greater peace than we have in this, I say no more. (141 f., §10)

## Mission

### *In Solidarity with Those Most in Need*

Apostolic zeal is certainly the hallmark of Xavier. Before he was assigned to India, he worked with the first Jesuits in the various ministries to the sick and the poor in Venice and Bologna. Another priest described his typical day.

After Mass he would spend the entire day hearing confessions, visiting the sick in the hospitals and prisoners in their jails, serving the poor, preaching in the piazzas, and teaching children or other uninstructed persons Christian doctrine.<sup>33</sup>

On the long sea voyage to India, he was described by one passenger as “an angel of mercy” for his care for the sick. Several witnesses who were on the voyage testified to his tireless works of charity (103–5). Upon arrival in Goa he intensified his efforts. He thus describes his normal activities:

Here at Goa, I have taken up my residence in the hospital. I hear the confessions of those who are ill and give them Communion. . . . after I have finished with the sick, I hear the confessions of those who are well who come to see me; and in the afternoons I go to the jail to hear the confessions of the prisoners. . . . [Then] I go to the chapel of Our Lady that is near the hospital and there begin to teach the children their prayers, the Creed and the Commandments. (*Letters and Instructions*, 49 f., §12)

In that manner he carried out fully the mandate in the formula for final vows to “teach catechism to children.” He notes that on normal days there were one hundred children, and on feast days two hundred. This often led to baptism, and it is said that he baptized ten thousand in one month in thirteen villages. One result of these baptisms was not only entrance into the Catholic Church, but further security and protection for the people as they were linked by their common faith to the Portuguese leaders and powers.

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<sup>33</sup> Brodrick, *Xavier*, 63.

The day was not long enough to meet the needs of the people. In 1544 Xavier writes as follows:

During this time there were so many who came and asked me to come to their homes to recite some prayers over their sick, and others who came in search of me because of their infirmities, that the mere reading of the Gospels, the teaching of the boys, baptizing, translating the prayers, answering their questions, which were never failing, and then the burial of the dead, left me no time for other occupations. (67, §6)

In a letter to Ignatius, he described his ministry to children.

[T]he children in these villages would not allow me any time to say my office or to eat or sleep until I had taught them some prayers. Then I began to understand that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Since it would have been impious to refuse so holy a request, I began with the confession of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creed, Our Father, and Hail Mary and taught them in this way. I saw that they were by nature very gifted; and I am convinced that, if they had anyone to instruct them in our holy faith, they would be good Christians. (61, §2, with italics in the source)

Sometimes the accusation was made that Xavier traveled too much, and did not give sufficient attention to the Jesuits in India, whose superior he was. In one of his letters, he indicates his awareness of this concern, but also gives the positive reason for the journeys.

If I had not traveled to those lands, I would not know their needs; and how could I take care of them and from practical experience be able to tell the priests how they should conduct themselves, since experience is one of the principal parts of prudence?

### *Partnership with Others*

Xavier did what he could, with limited resources, mostly from King John III of Portugal. When he saw how great the harvest was in India, he wrote back the famous letter challenging the university students. The letter was written to the Jesuits in Rome, expressing the hope and desire of Xavier for more workers in the vineyard.

Many fail to become Christians in these regions because they have no one who is concerned with such pious and holy matters. Many times I am seized with the thought of going to the schools in your lands and crying out there, like a man who has lost his mind,



and especially at the University of Paris, telling those in the Sorbonne who have a greater regard for learning than desire to prepare themselves to produce fruits with it. (67, §8)

In his own ministry, due to unfamiliarity with the language, he had to work with lay catechists in translating and sharing the good news. He was clearly concerned not only with the growth of the Society of Jesus, but also with the seminary in Goa for the training of native vocations for the diocesan priesthood.

### *Called to Learned Ministry*

Xavier may have been more famous at the University of Paris for his athletic prowess than for his academic ability. He was not a great theologian or scholar. Yet, through his contact with Ignatius and the first Jesuits and his experience in India, he clearly saw the need for learning.

Immediately upon his arrival in Goa, Xavier saw the importance of St. Paul's College, which had been established by laymen. This was a mission seminary for the education of native priests. He assisted in the completion of the building. He envisioned that the college would grow and include those of different languages, countries, and races. He asked Ignatius to send men who could teach, preach, and assist in the growth of this institution, so important for the future of the Church in India. Thus as part of his program of development, he states that "the basis of all that I am saying . . . is that colleges should be multiplied in those regions with the assistance of the king of Portugal" (292, §8).

Eventually too, as he experienced more of the rich cultures of the Far East, he began to see the wisdom, depth, strength, and importance of the culture of Japan. Impressed with what he heard about Japan, and then with first-hand experience, he wanted to study the scriptures of Japan and learn their language. He began to learn to write in Japanese script, translate the catechism into Japanese, and memorize the creed (330, §3). Despite his limited facility in languages, Xavier understood that the use of the vernacular was crucial to the missionary enterprise. This insistence upon translation, taken up by later Jesuit missionaries in India, China, and North



America, is rightly considered a breakthrough in the history of the missions.<sup>34</sup>

One could say that while Xavier was led by a sense of charity in his mission in India, he was led more by his intellect as he journeyed through Japan. He adapted his style and tactics. To see an important leader, he brought gifts and clothed himself with the garb of the educated. There was success, but very limited success. He speaks of five hundred converts in one month. He considered the mission in Japan a two-way street. Writing to Ignatius, he explains that he has learned much from the people of Japan, including insight into his own iniquity! (344, §2).

With this limited success, Xavier began to formulate more long-term plans. He planned to create links between the universities of Europe and Japan, so there could be an interchange of students (311, §54). He explains, "I shall not fail to write to the University of Paris, which will communicate this information to the other universities of Europe" (220, §9; 231, §4). He planned to set up a residence in Japan where the Jesuits could learn the language, culture, and stories of the people (340 f., §5). Then, having forged links between Europe and Japan, he anticipates that when students come from Europe to attend these universities, they will find the Jesuit Fathers and Brothers of great help in this endeavor.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, we note the advice of Xavier concerning young Jesuits who might be sent to the Far East. His emphasis on learning is present, even if it is secondary to virtue. This of course is in harmony with the writing and thought of St. Ignatius, to whom he writes as follows in 1549:

Those who are to go among these infidels to convert them have need of many virtues: obedience, humility, perseverance, patience, love of their neighbor, and great chastity because of the numerous occasions of sin; and they should have good judgment and sound bodies in order to endure the hardships. (216, §3)

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Coutinho, *The Ignatian Ideal and Jesuit Reality* (Gujarat, Gujarat Press, 1999), 98.

<sup>35</sup> See Jacques Lacouture, *Jesuits: A Multibiography* (Washington: Counterpoint, 1995), 133. Lacouture is insightful and positive regarding the missionary thrust and shift in the theory and method of mission that he finds in Xavier.

*Men Sent, Always Available for New Missions*

Xavier quickly became the prime example of the Jesuit, the one ready, available, and sent on mission. "Here I am, send me," he responds to Ignatius, and the following day he leaves Rome for Portugal and the Far East. In accordance with the mandate given him, he would not stay in India, but undertake a series of further missions to Malacca. Then after discernment he traveled to Japan, and finally he set out to go to China. There was a change not only in location but also a change and development in his theology or strategy of mission. One can speak of a conversion on the part of Xavier, in response to what he saw and experienced. This was for him the call of the Spirit.

In the holy Church, I implored God, with continual prayer, to make known to me his will, which I have fully made up my mind not to fail to accomplish, for I am confident that he who gives the will would also give the strength to accomplish it. Then, with great joy, I understood that God desired me to go to Malacca. I hope much that God will give me great help for my voyage. I am firmly resolved to accomplish what, by God's divine inspiration, I have decided upon. (127, §1, in a slightly different translation)

In the case of Xavier, the new meant what was untried and unknown. He knew there were dangers and hardships involved, but he saw this as part of the mission to bring the Gospel to the Far East.

My friends and those who are devoted to me are appalled by my undertaking such a long and dangerous voyage [to China]. But I am more terrified than they at seeing what little faith they have, since God our Lord has power and dominion over the tempests of the seas of China and Japan. . . .

God our Lord has power over all these. I do not have the least fear except of God, that he might inflict some punishment upon me for being negligent in his service, unfit and useless for spreading the name of Jesus Christ among peoples who do not know him. All the other fears, dangers, and tribulations told me by my friends I count as naught.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>The substance of this citation comes from Brodrick, *Xavier*, 345 f., which in turn relies upon Schurhammer. The letter that forms the basis of this citation is found among Xavier's letters, p. 248. In it Xavier writes to Simão Rodriguez from Cochín on Feb. 1, 1549.



Xavier knows that apostolic availability means for him a call to the new and untried, to the unknown and the dangerous. Yet he responds generously and hopefully: "As this voyage to China is difficult and full of peril, I know not whether it will succeed, but I still have good hopes."<sup>37</sup>

### *Ever Searching for the Magis*

Xavier was sent not only to India, but to the larger area of the Far East. The search for the *magis* led him to explore the possibilities of mission work in Japan. He had heard of the advanced cultures of the people there, "a race with great desire for knowledge" (*Letters and Instructions*, 177, §15). This would not be simply another few days' journey from India, but an arduous journey of several thousand miles further east from India. Eventually too he set his sights on China, having heard of the potential there for the Gospel.

Some years later, Valignano, the Jesuit visitor and superior of those in the Far East, notes the change in tactics undertaken by Xavier as he began work in Japan. He changed his mode of procedure and changed his dress, no longer appearing in the guise of extreme poverty. Valignano explains the reason for this:

From experience he realized that, by going about miserably clad and scornful of self, he not only did not further his plans for God's honor but positively hindered them. The Japanese, true to their penchant for ceremonial and public marks of esteem, had no conception of the meaning of humility and mortification (as hitherto practiced by Xavier). For that reason he decided from now on to dress and behave in another manner, thus showing a genuine contempt of self, seeking in all he did God's honor alone, for whose sake he embraced, indifferently, either prestige or contempt. They accordingly returned to Yamaguchi better clad and accompanied by two or three servants with the viceroy's and bishop's letters and presents.<sup>38</sup>

Lacouture speaks very positively of this significant shift or development in Xavier, calling it a genuine conversion. In his view it could be considered a prelude to the missionary method of Mateo Ricci, which was based upon a positive understanding of the culture

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<sup>37</sup> Brodrick, *Xavier*, 523.

<sup>38</sup> Alessandro Valignano, *Mission Principles for Japan*, vol. 1, ed. Josef Schuette (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980), 320.



of the Chinese.<sup>39</sup> Thus we might characterize this shift as a move from mass conversions in India, to dialogue and interchange with the religious traditions of Japan. Xavier's strategy in Japan had mixed results. He himself did not convert many in Japan, but he left things in place for his successors. Reportedly they made thirty thousand converts in the next twenty years. On a personal level, the missionary effort in Japan was very satisfying, as Xavier writes with a note of triumphalism eighteen months before his death:

The difficulties encountered in working with an intelligent race that is eager to know in what law one is to be saved bring with them very great consolations, so much so, in fact, that in Yamaguchi after the duke had given us permission to preach the law of God, so many people came to ask questions and to argue with us that it seems to me that I can truthfully say that I had never before in my life received so much pleasure and spiritual consolation as I did in seeing that God our Lord confounded the pagans through us and the victory which we were constantly gaining over them. (*Letters and Instructions*, 342f.)

As a result of this pioneer missionary work, according to O'Malley, "Jesuits came to believe that Japan was their most promising mission in the East."<sup>40</sup>

Xavier wanted to proceed further. He set his sights on China. China was highly praised by the Japanese whom he got to know and respect. He heard that Japan had received much of its wisdom from China, and he reasoned that if China was converted, then conversion in Japan would be easier. He held high hopes for missionary work in China, and hoped that eventually many Jesuits would go there. Of course, this was not to be, and he died on the island of Sancian in sight of his destination.

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<sup>39</sup> See chap. 4, "Francis Xavier, Orientalist," in Lacouture, *Jesuits*.

<sup>40</sup> John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 77.

### III. Peter Favre

#### Life in the Spirit

##### *A Deep Personal Love for Jesus Christ*

Peter Favre, already studying for the priesthood, came to know, love, and serve God in a deeper way after making the Exercises under Ignatius. He then became, in the words of Ignatius, the one who was most proficient in sharing the Exercises.

As O'Malley explains, Favre and the first Jesuits saw much of their ministry as similar to that of Jesus in the Fourth Week of the Exercises, namely, Jesus Christ bringing the consolation of the resurrection to his followers (*SpEx* 82–84). Favre makes this explicit in his *Memoriale* when he recounts how on one occasion he awoke at midnight, prayed for others, and hoped to be a minister of Christ the Consoler.

I called to mind Christ the Redeemer, Christ the Consoler, Christ the Giver of Life who enlightens and succors, the merciful and compassionate one who is our Lord and our God. . . .

Then with great fervor and a totally new awareness, I wished and petitioned that I might at last be allowed to become the servant and the minister of Christ who consoles, helps, delivers, heals, liberates, saves, enriches, and strengthens.<sup>41</sup>

He reflects on how celebration and participation at Mass leads to this personal, loving devotion to Jesus Christ, and to the response of love.

Christ gives himself to me at Mass—and does the same in my prayers and works. So I should surrender myself to him in every way. I should give myself not only to him directly, but also—to all my neighbors, good and bad— . . . out of love for him, preaching, teaching, doing good.

There is, therefore, an unending need of turning one's spirit toward the road that leads to the Cross, since Christ Crucified is the

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<sup>41</sup> Most of the references to Favre will be from the *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre: The "Memoriale" and Selected Letters and Instructions*, ed. Edmond C. Murphy and John Padberg (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). Here the reference is to p. 157, §151. In this essay we will abbreviate this source to *Spiritual Writings* and specify the page and section number in that book.

true way to the glory of both soul and body; indeed, not only the Way, but also the Truth and the Life.<sup>42</sup>

He then prays that "all my interior, and especially my heart, may open and make way for Christ as he enters, leaving a place for him in the centre of the heart" (ibid). This Christ-centered spirituality is further explained in the *Memoriale*. He explains himself more clearly:

I must strive to find Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, first in the center of my heart, and below, that is, within me; then above me, by means of my mind; and outside me, by means of my senses. (*Spiritual Writings*, 244, §307)

He reflects on one particular encounter with Jesus Christ at Mass. Favre then offers the beautiful description of the Eucharist as "the sacrament of truth."

The same day at Mass, while I was holding in my hands the most precious Body of the Lord, I had an intense awareness of what it is to be in the presence of the sacrament of truth, the sacred sign containing in itself all truth and all goodness. (197, §223)

Favre also offers us one example of how his prayer was Christ-centered:

O Jesus Christ, may your death be my life; may I learn to find life in your death. May your labors be my rest, your human weakness my strength. May your humiliation be my source of glory, your passion my delight, your sadness my joy. May your abasement be my uplifting—in short, may your sufferings be all I possess. For you, O my Lord, have renewed a life drifting hopelessly towards death and you destroyed death, which seemed destined to remain forever, never to be dissolved. (149, §137)

Favre also desired to instill in others this personal love for Jesus Christ. Thus, in 1545 he writes back to the scholastics he had visited in Coimbra:

And so, fare you well, and always serve Christ the Lord with gladness, for he is the source of all welfare. Let your whole concern be only this: to cling to no one but Jesus, who can never be taken away from you. . . .

Only one medium should remain between any of us; Christ, the mediator between God and men, who is all things in all. It is he that

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<sup>42</sup> Cited in Bangert, *Other Towns*, 162 f.



we should keep always present to us, and it is in him that each of us should look for himself and his brother. We should seek each other and mutually behold each other in our origin, our cause, our principle. (373f.)

### *Contemplative in Action*

Favre translated this Ignatian phrase into flesh and blood as he moved about Europe. He was living the Fourth Week of the *Exercises*, going about, like Christ the Comforter, bringing consolation to Christians seeking to rekindle their faith in the face of the Protestant Reformation. William Bangert, biographer of Peter Favre, calls him par excellence, "the contemplative in the midst of work—envisioned by St. Ignatius—as the ideal for his sons."<sup>43</sup>

His *Memoriale* is a marvelous personal document that shows how regularly and continually Favre related and interwove his prayer and his work, contemplation and action. Much of his prayer becomes a prayer of petition in reaction to events and personal encounters. Of the many examples we offer a few:

On January 10, Favre's reflection on Christmas and the Christ Child leads him to pray concretely.

Here I was inspired to pray fervently for all little children—even for those still in the womb—for they have not the knowledge or ability to pray, or to act, or to recognize the good gifts already given or to be given in the future through our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Spiritual Writings*, 202, §227)

While in Coimbra, witnessing the destructive power of the wind and rains, he describes how he is led to pray for flood victims, whose houses, goods, were destroyed (see *ibid.*, 288, §393–94).

During his travels, on seeing a funeral procession, he reflects on the marvelous resurrection, recalls that we are dust, yet our bodies are destined for glory. He thanks God for the good he is able to accomplish through this mortal body (see *ibid.*, 100f., §55).

On a journey to Ratisbon, he looks back over the graces and insights he received. We see clearly how he is grateful for the ability to see and find God in all things, to turn all events into prayer.

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<sup>43</sup> *Other Towns*, vii.

On the journey you received great consolations in different prayers and contemplations, and you were given many new methods and subjects of prayer as you traveled along. For example, as you drew near to some place and looked at it or heard it talked about, you received a method of asking grace from our Lord that the archangel of that region with all the angel guardians of its inhabitants might be well disposed to us. . . .

I prayed for an increase of the plenty I saw around me; I gave thanks for it on behalf of its owners or sought pardon for them because spiritually they are unable to recognize those blessings nor the hand they come from. (75 f., §21)

Favre lived his early life as a shepherd and farmhand in the hills of France. As he journeyed through Europe, he was very aware of the turn of the seasons. In his *Memoriale*, as a new year begins he reflects on time, the upcoming year, and the four seasons to the spiritual life:

A holy desire led me to wish that my soul might have four spiritual seasons during this coming year: a winter, so that the seeds sown in the soil of my soul by God might be tended and so be enabled to put down roots; a spring, so that my piece of earth might germinate and grow its crop; a summer, so that the fruit might ripen into an abundant harvest; and an autumn, so that the ripe fruit might be picked and gathered into the divine barns for safekeeping lest any of it be lost. (190, §206)

As he moves into a new dwelling on his journey, he looks back, reflects, and simply prays over the different lodgings in which he has lived in his lifetime. He reflects on how God has guided and protected him even in his restlessness and his wanderings. He notes that some lodgings were wretched, filthy, and cold, and at times he had to sleep in the open air. Then he offers this prayer:

May he be blessed forever who protected us in all these situations—myself and all those in the same or different situations! For all this, I thanked God, hoping for his protection in this new abode of mine as well. (231, §286 f.)

On another occasion he looks back in gratitude for how God has been present to him through the ministry of priests. He recalls the priests who heard his confessions, and

I similarly remembered the priest who had baptized me, the one who had confirmed me, those who had conferred sacred orders on



me, and in general all those who had administered any of the sacraments to me. (180 f., 190)

He then prayerfully recalls those who were his teachers, again with a grateful memory for their love, service, and dedication.

In a remarkable, insightful, better-known passage, Favre reflects explicitly on the relation between contemplation and action, between finding God in prayer and finding God in action. This remarkable passage has much significance for those whose goal is an apostolic spirituality. Favre records his reflections:

I then noted . . . that, by seeking God in good works through the spirit, one will more readily find him afterwards in prayer than if one had sought him first in prayer so as to find him subsequently in good works, as is often done.

For he who seeks and finds the spirit of Christ in good works makes much more solid progress than the person whose activity is limited to prayer alone. So then, to possess Christ in our actions or to possess him in our prayer often amounts to either an "effective" or an "affective" possession. (141, §126)

He goes on to explain that his own life should have something of Martha and Mary in it. He should apply himself both to prayer and to holy works. In short, his life should unite the active and contemplative lives.

Favre then continues, explaining that, in contrast to those living the life of contemplation, those in the active apostolic life cultivate specific virtues and specific emphases in virtues. Apostolic workers need "a particular kind of patience, humility, and charity, accompanied by other virtues, for work with the poor and the sick, with sinners, or their persecutors or others" (142, §127).

In a word, Favre presents and lives the Ignatian ideal of finding God and loving God in all things—an ideal for himself and for others.

Oh, that the time may soon come when I contemplate and love no creature without God and, rather, contemplate and love God in all things or at least fear him! That would raise me to the knowledge of God in himself and, in the end, all things in him, so that he would be for me all in all for eternity. (244, §306)

Let me add another way in which Favre echoes the mind and heart of Ignatius. Recall the epithet applied to Ignatius during the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Society of Jesus.



"Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est."<sup>44</sup> One of the many translations of this packed phrase would be "To suffer no restriction from anything however great, and yet to be contained in the tiniest of things: that is divine." This succinctly describes Ignatius as one who had the greatest, most universal vision, but was also able to do the next small, particular action needed. Ignatius, with the broadest of vision, searched always for the *magis*, but he also accomplished the task at hand, however small or minute. In a similar way, Favre advises that we should

[s]eek grace for the smallest things, and you will also find grace to accomplish, to believe in, and to hope for the greatest things. Attend to the smallest things, examine them, think about putting them into effect, and the Lord will grant you greater. (159, §153)

He adds this note of caution: "Many seek anxiously . . . for grace to perform good works of a more general kind while neglecting in the meantime particular tasks for which it would have been easy to find grace" (*ibid.*).

In the spirit of Ignatius, Favre encourages great desires, believing that they come from God. But these must at the same time come down to earth, to ordinary, everyday affairs. "God often causes us to desire and to envisage the most exalted things, to place our hope in them in order that we may accomplish readily and without diffidence at least quite ordinary things" (160, §155). Perhaps more than any other of the First Companions, Favre learned from Ignatius how to seek and find God in all things. Thus, as Bangert put it,

Peter learned this lesson personally from Ignatius, so well indeed that his life of labor and his life of prayer blended into one unified act of love and service of God. One admirer of Peter has called him "un Chartreux itinerant"—a Carthusian of the Highway.<sup>45</sup>

A contemporary and friend of Favre, in fact the Carthusian prior Girard recounted this about the Jesuit:

Master Peter says: From everything you see or hear always draw some fruit, and turn it into an occasion of either a feeling of compunction, or the recitation of a prayer, or an expression of God's

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<sup>44</sup> The epithet is found in the centenary volume, *Imago primi sæculi*, published in 1640. Hugo Rahner discusses its meaning in "Die Grabschrift des Loyola," *Stimmen der Zeit* 139 (1946–47): 321–37.

<sup>45</sup> Bangert, *Other Towns*, 95.

praise, or an incentive to reproduce in one's own life what is worthy of imitation. (cited *ibid.*, 199)

### *Apostolic Prayer and Spirituality*

An important element of Favre's life and mission was to pray for particular persons, especially important leaders. In his *Memoriale* he reports that he prays explicitly for the Pope, the Emperor, the Kings of France and England. He prays for Luther and Melancthon—adding that he overlooks their faults (see *Spiritual Writings*, 127, §102). He celebrates Mass for France and prays for its leaders, its abbeys, parishes, and universities. He feels much devotion in these prayers (see *ibid.*, 127, §102). This echoes the apostolic prayer of Ignatius with his constant request for prayers for our benefactors, for the Pope and bishops. So too, in the mind of Ignatius the first responsibility of the rector is to sustain the whole college by his prayers and holy desires (see *Cons.*, 174, §424).

Noteworthy too in Favre is his special devotion to saints and angels. Nadal, friend and admirer of Favre, presents this as the advice of Favre for those about to undertake a journey.

When we enter a city or town, we should invoke its angels, archangels and patron saints. In our greeting to them and in our request for their help, we should be as familiar with them as though we were paying a visit to our fellowmen. . . . We should give thanks for the blessings showered on that region, for the fruits of the earth, the streams and all such things, reflecting how great is the number who receive all these blessings and how few there are who give thanks to God. . . .

When we happen to meet unknown persons on the road, be they soldiers or others, we should close our minds to suspicious thought and think but good of them. In our heart we should wish them well and think how we might be united with them in the bond of charity.... If something untoward should happen, we should receive it as coming not from man but from God without Whose providential guidance nothing can take place.<sup>46</sup>

In the age of the Lutheran reforms, when interest in relics and devotions to saints were being criticized, Favre continued to find great strength in these devotions. In the Catholic tradition, he found

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<sup>46</sup> Bangert, *Other Towns*, 96 f.



that the sacramentals, as well as the seven sacraments, led him to God. On one occasion, he describes his reactions when he was entering a church: "[T]he ceremonies, the lights, the organ, the chanting, the splendor of the relics and the decorations—all these gave me such a great feeling of devotion that I could not explain it" (*Spiritual Writings*, 118, §87).

As a result, he blesses the organ, the organist, and the benefactors, the choir, and the music too. He then reflects, somewhat polemically, on how he esteems "the least of these devotional activities, performed with a simple Catholic faith, more highly than a thousand degrees of that idle faith, made so much of by those who ill agree with the hierarchical Church" (118f., §87).

Yet we must add that this devotional Catholicism, while it frequently relates to sacramentals and saints, is rooted in the cross and in the paschal mystery, which is at the heart of the *Spiritual Exercises*. During Holy Week, for example, Favre meditates on the wood of the cross, the tree of life that produces fruit (see 225–28, §273–81). He speaks of his own need to die on the cross, be buried, and then experience a resurrection of the body.

## Union of Minds and Hearts

Peter Favre, the first priest of the Society, earned the greatest of respect and love from the other First Companions. He was gifted with the art and grace of conversation, something very important in the eyes of Ignatius. Thus Simão Rodrigues pays a wonderful tribute to Favre, describing him as

endowed with charming grace in dealing with people, which up to now I must confess I have not seen in anyone else. Somehow he entered into friendship in such a way, bit by bit coming to influence others in such a manner, that his very way of living and his gracious conversation powerfully drew to the love of God all those with whom he dealt.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Simão Rodrigues, *A Brief and Exact Account* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 5.



*An Apostolic Body in the Church*

Favre clearly saw himself and the other First Companions as members of an apostolic body, in service to the Church. In the name of the First Companions, he wrote back to their old principal at the University of Paris to explain their present status and their reason for special obedience to the pope:

All of us who have bound ourselves together in this Society have pledged ourselves to the supreme pontiff, since he is the master of Christ's whole harvest. When we made this offering of ourselves to him, we indicated that we were prepared for anything that he might decide in Christ for us. Accordingly, if he will send us there where you are calling us, we shall gladly go. The reason why we subjected ourselves to his will and judgment in this manner was that we knew that he has a greater knowledge of what is expedient for Christianity as a whole.<sup>48</sup>

During his all-too-brief apostolic life as a Jesuit, he served the Church by traveling extensively through Europe. One memorable part of this mission to build up the apostolic body of the Society involved recruiting the young Peter Canisius through the Exercises. Originally from Nijmegen, Canisius traveled to Mainz from Cologne, where he had just completed university studies. There he made the Exercises and found his vocation to be a Jesuit. Favre was truly instrumental in establishing the Society in Germany.

Like Francis Xavier, Favre rejoiced when he received news of the companions. The letters he received from Xavier in India brought him joy, consolation, and spiritual strength. He once wrote as follows in a letter to Ignatius:

May God grant that you receive at least some of the letters I send and that you realize the desire we have to learn about you and, through you, about all the rest of our men and houses. So far we have received not the least bit of news. . . . Each week, indeed, each day, I feel new pain because I am not receiving your letters.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> This is found in several sources, e.g., *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola: Epistolæ et instructiones*, vol. 1, vol. 22 of the *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1964), 132f. Joseph Conwell, in his *Impelling Spirit* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 119, provides further information on the background of this quotation.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Paul Mallia, *The Story of Three Friends* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications, 1993), 74.

Favre expressed solidarity and love for his Jesuit brothers through his prayers for them. At the time, a feast was celebrated each year on July 15, after the Ascension, recalling "the dispersion of the Apostles." As was his custom, Favre reflects on this feast, and adds, "there occurred to me also many prayers of commendation for my scattered brothers" (*Spiritual Writings*, 93, §46).

In a letter to a priest who later joined the Society, Favre expressed his belief in the importance of unity in the Society:

[Y]ou must conceive, by way of foundation, a powerful and unflagging desire for the Society's peace and union of hearts to be preserved and increased not only by your own efforts, but by each and every man living in the Society; and you will (if need be) devote your own concern and efforts to their persevering and progressing in this humility and union of the members with the body. (330)

Then, very much in accord with the mind of Ignatius, he urges the priest to find positive traits rather than faults in others. "You should . . . examine with sharp eyes and imitate those virtues and behaviors of your brothers which most conform to the Rules" (331, §3). With insight and wisdom, he explains that, when observing a displeasing word or act in another, "You should look at it carefully and ask whether what appears evil or disgraceful in your brother's exterior may not be present, even more evilly and disgracefully, in your own soul" (332, §7). This same attitude of self-criticism is found in a letter on obedience to the Jesuits in Coimbra. He explains that seeing a fault in another should not lead to ill will. He concludes his letter with advice to turn one's criticism inward to one's own faults:

[T]hat will give me plenty of material for judgment—and I should never grant myself a pardon for anything. As Seneca says, "Spare others, never yourself." Amen. Amen. Once more Amen. (372)

We return again to the deep love and hope that Favre had for the Society. He reflects upon this in his *Memoriale*:

With regard to our Society (concern for which never leaves me, by a grace of God), I felt a desire which had aroused great devotion at other times. It was that the Society might one day grow sufficiently in numbers and in virtue to be capable, through the quantity and quality of its members, of restoring at some time the ruins of all religious orders, the present ruins and those soon to come—unless God intervenes. (219, §265)



The mission facing the Church and the Society of Jesus was daunting, and so he prays for an increase of vocations to the Society:

May Jesus send us persons of a faith, hope, and charity so universally Catholic and of a spirit so universal and so open as to concern itself with the restoration of all the ancient orders of the Church. (220, §265)

While he looks to the body of the Society to carry out great work for the Church during the struggles of the Reformation, he sees himself humbly as Christ's broom to help others. Then he extends the image to the entire Society:

I wished too that our whole Society might be destined by God for this: that Christ, who has in his dwelling, the Church, so many illustrious instruments, might deign to begin cleaning out his dwelling in our time and, for this purpose, make use of and shape us and all future members of the Society into the first, and in a sense, the most menial implements, brooms, that is. (313, §441)

## Mission

Favre was the missionary on pilgrimage. His energy was put into sharing the Spiritual Exercises, preaching, teaching, and hearing confessions of church and civic leaders. In a letter he wrote to Ignatius, he described what he did as he entered Mainz. "Upon arriving here, we entered upon some spiritual conversations and arrangements to give the Exercises" (339).

Conversation, as mentioned above, was to build up the Society, but also a key instrument in his apostolic work. In another place, he speaks of this as "personal exhortation." Favre's warm personality, his irresistible charm, attracted people to friendship, frequently led to the sacrament of confession, and beyond that to their making the Spiritual Exercises under his guidance. Gentle conversation would be a hallmark of his approach to both the reform of the Church and the preservation of Christian unity.

### *In Solidarity with Those Most in Need*

His heart was moved, as his travels brought him face to face with poverty. In his *Memoriale* he explains how his prayer led him at least to desire to help and serve those in need.



And then, at night prayer, I felt strongly inspired to do my very utmost to provide for the needy and the homeless sick wandering about the city of Mainz, a hospice where they could be gathered . . . and given shelter, and receive treatment and recover their health.<sup>50</sup>

A letter to Xavier, far off in India, lists some of his activities in Cologne. These include preaching, sharing the Exercises, and a special ministry to students who he hoped would receive religious and priestly vocations (*Spiritual Writings*, 363). In the city of Ratisbon, he notes, there are over six thousand beggars, and several thousand strangers, newcomers who arrive from the countryside. He reflects on his inadequacy to address these needs and wishes he had a flair for business, so that he could do more to alleviate the problems. He would like to gather the homeless and give them shelter and a place where they could receive medical treatment (see 162f., §159).

Whenever he could not concretely address the social problems, he prayed constantly, and he experienced that his prayer increased his desire to act.

There came to my mind the manifold afflictions of men: their diseases, their sins and their obduracy, their moods of despair and their tears, disasters, famines, plagues, woes, and other trials; and on the other hand, as a remedy for all these, I called to mind Christ the Redeemer, Christ the Consoler, Christ the Giver of Life who enlightens and succors, the merciful and compassionate one who is our Lord and our God. Calling on all the power in those titles of his, I prayed that he might come to all men and relieve their needs.

Then with great fervor and a totally new awareness, I wished and petitioned that I might at last be allowed to become the servant and the minister of Christ, who consoles, helps, delivers, heals, liberates, saves, enriches, and strengthens. I asked that I also, through him, might be enabled to come to the aid of many, to console them and free them from many ills, to deliver and strengthen them, to bring them light not in spiritual matters alone but also (if I may be allowed the boldness of presuming it in God) in a material way, together with whatever charity can do for the soul and body of any of my fellowmen. (157, §151)

His own commitment to good works was strong and unwavering: "I wished to be given grace not to let a day pass without some notable

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<sup>50</sup> Bangert, *Other Towns*, 160.

fruit. For God gives us life to work out our salvation, and he assigns some good work for each day" (291, §398).

Favre even saw the hearing of confessions as a way of reaching out to the poor. With remarkable insight into the social nature of the sacrament, as a confessor he urged his penitents to reach out to others:

[W]hile hearing confessions, I considered that a confessor should not only take care of the soul that submits itself to him to be instructed, admonished, corrected, and led to perfection, but should also see to it that his penitents bring help and comfort to all those—the dead, sinners, or others—who may be in material or spiritual need. (281, §373)

### *Partnership with Others*

Even though Favre often traveled alone throughout the northern countries, he continually enlisted others to assist in the work of renewal. We can see Favre reaching out to church and civic leaders as possible collaborators. He writes these words from Germany:

On three occasions I explained at length to him [the Bishop of Speyer] the work of the Company and he showed that he was very impressed. He invited me to dinner last Thursday, the very day he invited the Duke of Bavaria, the brother of the Count Palatine, and the Archbishop of Trier. I spoke to all of them about the work of the Company.<sup>51</sup>

He adds that "the outcome of it all is that he [the bishop] was very much inclined to make the Exercises." According to Bangert, he frequently gave the Exercises to bishops and vicars general, devoting as much as one hour a day to each of the retreatants. Writing to Ignatius, Favre explains how in the city of Parma he gave the Exercises to priests and how "some of the parish priests are giving the Exercises to their subjects" (*Spiritual Writings*, 319). He then adds that the message of the Exercises has spread through the schoolmasters, "some of whom have even given the initial Exercises to a number of their capable students." In this way, many have been brought back to the Church. He adds that those who made the Exercises then

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<sup>51</sup> Letter to Ignatius of January 25, 1541, cited *ibid.*, 94.



incorporate insights and ideas from the Exercises into their sermons, and this too has had a powerful impact—reaping many fruits (see *ibid.*, 320).

In Parma, Favre formed a confraternity of laypersons, and composed for them a rule of life. In this way, the fruits of the Exercises would grow and be handed on. In addition to this collaboration with the laity, he shared the Exercises with priests and challenged those living in concubinage to reform their lives.

### *Called to Learned Ministry*

At the end of his missionary journey through Europe, Peter Favre returned to Rome and prepared to assist at the Council of Trent. Obviously Ignatius appreciated his theological expertise. In the words of his biographer, Mary Purcell, he was “not a professional theologian,” but had a “perception of mysteries which experience yields, the wisdom imprinted by piety and matured by discernment, reflection of a particular type born of personal encounters with Jesus Christ.”<sup>52</sup> In his relationship with followers of Luther, he shows remarkable insight and an ecumenical attitude far ahead of his times. He was able to engage in dialogue with respect and love. This surely contributed to his pastoral effectiveness.

On one occasion, while Laínez was at the Council of Trent, he wrote to Favre asking for advice on how to relate to the followers of Luther. Favre offered a number of suggestions:

Remember, if we want to be of help to them [converts to Protestantism] we must be careful to regard them with love, to love them in deed and in truth, and to banish from our own souls any thought that might lessen our love and esteem for them.

We have to win their good will so that they will love us and readily confide in us. This can be done by speaking familiarly with them on subjects about which we agree, and by avoiding points of discussion that might give rise to argument: for argument usually ends in one side lording it over the other. Neither should we act towards the Lutherans as though they were pagans, but rather address ourselves to a man’s will, to his heart, as a means of approaching with prudence matters of faith. . . .

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<sup>52</sup> Purcell, *Quiet Companion*, 54.



The man who can speak with the heretics on a holy life, on virtue and prayer, will do far more good for them than those who, in the name of authority, set out to confound them by sheer weight of theological argument.<sup>53</sup>

True to his natural gift and grace for friendly conversation, Favre found himself ineffective in large gatherings. He judged that the colloquies or meetings of theologians were not constructive in promoting unity. He emphasized spiritual ecumenism, and saw the problem of unity to be at bottom a question of spirituality. If both sides were to grow in holiness and put on Christ, then renewal, reform, and reunion might succeed. His key instrument towards this spiritual renewal was the sharing of the Exercises.

Drawing on his pastoral experience and his emphasis on the pastoral dimension of mission, he wrote a long document to a fellow priest on how to hear confessions (*Spiritual Writings*, 356–61). He urges giving positive, constructive suggestions on ways to improve one's prayer and life of charity. True to his character, Favre urges the priest to be gentle and kind, emphasizing the love and forgiveness of God. The penitent should leave with the clear desire to return to the same confessor because of his kind advice. In this way Favre was truly an inspiration for the first Jesuits in their important ministry of reconciliation.

St. Peter Canisius, a Doctor of the Church, writes of the man who led him into the Society:

Never have I seen or heard a more learned and more profound theologian or a man of such striking and remarkable holiness. No word of his is not filled with God, and never does he become wearisome to his listeners.<sup>54</sup>

### *Ever Searching for the Magis*

In his seven years of ministry throughout Europe, Favre followed in the footsteps of the early Ignatius, the pilgrim searching for where he could do the greater good for the reform of the Church and the spread of the Catholic faith. What began as a mission to the

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<sup>53</sup> Cited *ibid.*, viii-ix, 163 f. The complete letter is found in *Spiritual Writings*, 379–81.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Bangert, *Xavier*, 148, and Mallia, *Story of Three Friends*, 72.

north from Rome, turned out to be a pilgrim journey of over seven thousand miles, for a period of seven years. In his search for the greater good for the mission, he traveled from Germany to Holland, to Spain, to Portugal, France, Switzerland, and eventually back to Italy and Rome, where he ended his life's journey before he was able to assist at the Council of Trent. The title of Bangert's biography accurately describes his ministry: like the Lord he served, he was called "to the other towns."

While he practiced such availability in his own mission, he also exhorted younger Jesuits to apostolic mobility. After a visit to scholastics in Coimbra, he wrote a letter exhorting them to remain free from attachments and free for God alone.

Thus a man in obedience must never settle down to rest in any place or in any particular work subject to obedience, even if he experiences a holy and unmistakable spirit for it—not rest in it, I mean, in such a way that he loses his readiness for whatever obedience may enjoin. (*Spiritual Writings*, 371)

In his *Memoriale*, we see Favre very clearly, consciously reflecting on his work, on the people he meets, the cities he is in or to which he is bound. In and through these everyday events, he prayerfully seeks God's will. Where can he achieve the greater good? With whom can he share the treasure of the Spiritual Exercises? Without the acclaim of Ignatius or Xavier, Blessed Peter Favre can be remembered as a faithful, zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard, as all Jesuits are called to be.

## Conclusion

**I**gnatius, Xavier, and Favre faced a new world: the expansion of the Church from Europe to Africa, India, the Far East, and the Americas; the era of the Reformation in Europe; the world of print and science. They shaped their ministry in the light of these new movements of history. In the midst of unprecedented social change, they maintained a strong life in the Spirit, valued companionship with their brother Jesuits, and nurtured a zealous dedication to mission.

In the fast-moving and ever-changing world of today, we their followers, are expected to be pioneers. In accepting this challenge,



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we constantly return to our basic classic and foundational documents, the writings of Ignatius as in the *Exercises*, the *Constitutions*, and his letters. But as we see here, we can also profit much from examining lives, activities, and writings of Xavier and Favre. Reflecting on their words and works can deepen our awareness of the three charisms of Jesuit life that animated them in their day and inspire us in ours: life in the Spirit, union of minds and hearts, and commitment to mission.

We do not lack men of vision in our own day. Another study might include Jesuits like Pedro Arrupe, Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, Juan Luis Segundo, John Courtney Murray, Walter Ciszek, the martyrs of El Salvador. The times are different, but the motivation is the same. But in this jubilee year we can begin by reflecting on the three friends, Ignatius, Xavier, and Favre. This jubilee year is an opportunity for individuals, communities, and provinces to examine our roots more attentively and examine how best we can carry forth the best of our traditions.

In his allocution to General Congregation 34, Pope John Paul II cited his predecessor Pope Paul VI, who encouraged the Society of Jesus to continue its work today in the spirit of its past.

Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the front line between the deepest human desires and the perennial message of the Gospel, there have been, and there are, Jesuits. (GC 34, 253, §8)





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